

TESTIMONY

of

**Robert B. Hill, Ph. D.
Sociologist and Former Chair, U. S. Census Bureau
Advisory Committee on the African American Population**

on

**“Lessons Learned: How the New Administration Can Achieve
An Accurate and Cost-Effective 2010 Census”**

before

**U. S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government
Information, Federal Services and International Security**

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 342

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Mr. Chairman and Members of this Senate Subcommittee, I am pleased to be invited to provide testimony on the topic, "Lessons Learned: How the New Administration Can Achieve An Accurate and Cost-Effective 2010 Census." My testimony will focus on a major lesson learned from prior censuses: the importance of developing strong partnerships and community outreach strategies with hard-to-count populations in order to reduce the minority undercount in the Census.

My initial experience with decennial censuses goes back to 1969, when I was appointed National Director of the National Urban League's 1970 Census Project, which was a nationwide educational outreach program to reduce the Black undercount in the Census. This 1970 Census Project was launched by Whitney M. Young, Jr., the Executive Director of the National Urban League at that time. It was the first national partnership between the U. S. Census Bureau and a minority organization with over 100 branches throughout the nation. The primary purpose of the 1970 Census project, whose slogan was "Make Black Count," was to educate African Americans about the importance of the Census and to encourage them to cooperate with the Census.

Our community outreach project was successful in convincing large segments of the African American community to participate in the 1970 Census. However, post-Census studies revealed that there was still a sizable undercount of African Americans and other minorities in the 1970 Census. We believed that a major reason for the historic undercount of minority groups was the failure of the U. S. Census Bureau to adequately involve minority representatives in the advance planning and implementation of decennial censuses. Therefore, in his testimony to the House Census Oversight Committee in September 1970, Mr. Whitney Young recommended that the Census Bureau establish on-going Minority Advisory Committees to improve its strategies for reducing the Census undercount in hard-to-count communities.

Indeed, in 1975, under the visionary leadership of Vincent Barabba as Director, the Census Bureau formed the first Race and Ethnic Advisory Committees (or "REAC's") to assist the Bureau in planning for the 1980 Census. The initial REAC's comprised four minority groups: African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics and Asians. For the 2000 Census, a fifth group was added: Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. I served as Chair of the African American Advisory Committee in planning for the 1980 Census, the 2000 Census and in the initial planning for the 2010 Census.

Over the years, the Bureau has steadily improved its methods for enumerating the American population and for reducing the undercount among minority groups. While there is still a differential undercount of minorities, its size has steadily declined. For example, while the Bureau estimated that it missed about 1.5 million (or 8%) of African Americans in the 1970 Census, it failed to count about 1.0 million (or 1.84 %) of them in the 2000 Census. But the group with the highest undercount rates in decennial censuses--regardless of their race or ethnicity--are children under 18.

One of the most effective strategies the Bureau has used to reduce the minority undercount in decennial censuses is to develop strong partnerships with minority groups in all phases of census planning and to conduct aggressive education and outreach campaigns in hard-to-count communities. Based on my experiences with prior censuses, I would like to offer some recommendations to achieve a more accurate count of all groups in the 2010 Census.

First, I think it is very important that Congress provides the Census Bureau with adequate resources to undertake the mammoth task of achieving a fair and accurate count of the entire American population. President Obama and members of Congress should be congratulated for including an additional \$1 billion in the President's Stimulus Bill to enhance the Bureau's enumeration activities in the 2010 Census. I was especially pleased that the Bill stipulates that the Bureau can spend up to \$250 million for its Partnership Program and outreach efforts to minority communities and hard-to-reach populations.

Second, because of its comprehensive scope, the Census will directly stimulate this economy by hiring over half a million census takers to work throughout the nation. It is essential that there is an ethnically and racially diverse workforce from the staff in district offices to the enumerators in the neighborhoods and barrios. Members of hard-to-count populations should be adequately represented among the census hires at all levels, and especially among the new Partnership Specialists.

Third, one of the remarkable successes of the 2000 Census was the use of paid advertising to communicate messages and information about the importance of the Census to all groups throughout the nation, regardless of race or ethnicity. The fact that minority-owned advertising firms were extensively used to reach their respective groups played a large part in reducing the undercount in minority communities in 2000.

Fourth, the Bureau should permit the members of its five Race and Ethnic Advisory Committee to play a more prominent role in implementing the 2010 Census, such as recommending Partnership Specialists and Minority Advertising Firms; distributing foreign language census forms; and identifying local sites for training census workers and for serving as Assistance Centers to aid the elderly and other individuals to fill out their census forms.

These are a few suggestions that I have to offer to ensure that the 2010 Census will be one of the most accurate and equitable enumerations in our history. Thank you for this opportunity to share my views on this important issue with this Subcommittee.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert B. Hill, Ph. D.

Dr. Robert B. Hill is a Sociologist, who recently retired as Senior Researcher at Westat, a research firm in Rockville, Maryland. Previously, he was: Director of the Institute for Urban Research at Morgan State University; and Director of Research for the National Urban League.

Dr. Hill received the B A. degree in Sociology from the City College of New York and a Ph. D. in Sociology from Columbia University. He has taught on the adjunct faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, University of Maryland, Howard University, Morgan State University, Princeton University, New York University and Fordham University.

He was Chair of the U. S. Bureau of the Census Advisory Committee on the African American Population for the 1980 and 2000 Censuses. He is a member of the Association of Black Sociologists, the American Sociological Association, and the National Economic Association. He was the recipient of the HHS Adoption Excellence Award in 2001 for his research on family strengths and informal adoption. He was awarded honorary doctorate degrees from Sojourner-Douglass College in 2000 and from the University of Maryland at Baltimore in 2002 for his research on black families.

Dr. Hill's publications include: "The Strengths of Black Families: Revised 2nd Edition" (2003); "Counting and Undercounting Diversity in the 21st Century" (2000); "The Strengths of African American Families: Twenty-Five Years Later" (1999); "The Synthetic Method: Its Viability for Estimating the Census Undercount for States and Local Areas" (1980); "Informal Adoption Among Black Families" (1977); "The Strengths of Black Families" (1972); and various articles for the National Urban League's "The State of Black America."